



AN AMERICAN NIGHTMARE

At least 17 killed in shooting at Florida high school



By Charles Rabin,
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MIAMI HERALD

PARKLAND, Fla. — A tragedy unfolded Wednesday afternoon at a South Florida high school after police say an expelled teenager returned to campus and opened fire with an assault rifle, killing 17 and wounding 15 more in the worst school shooting in Florida history.

Just before dismissal at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, thousands of students puzzled at the sound of a fire alarm were launched into a panic when gunfire punctu-

ated the din. As teachers and students fled through hallways and hid under desks, a gunman opened fire, leaving a trail of bodies and stunned confusion in his wake.

The Broward Sheriff's Office says Nikolas Cruz, 19, walked the halls of the high school wielding an AR-15 and equipped with multiple magazines. U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson of Florida told reporters that Cruz pulled a fire alarm and then, wearing a gas mask, began tossing smoke bombs and shooting people as they ran through the haze.

Police say Cruz gunned down a dozen people inside buildings on the school's

sprawling campus, two more on the grounds, and one more on the corner of Pine Island Road as he fled. Two more died at the hospital. Many underwent surgery at Broward Health hospitals.

The Broward Sheriff's Office says the school, home to about 3,200 students, had been cleared by early evening.

They did not identify any victims.

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MIKE STOCKER/SUN SENTINEL

Left: Students are evacuated from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., after a shooting on Wednesday.

Lodi mom stunned after senseless act



Claudia Lopes talks about the attack on her son, Joseph Lopes, who was attacked and set on fire in Isleton, in her home in Lodi on Wednesday. A picture of a younger Joseph is displayed next to her.

NEWS-SENTINEL PHOTOGRAPHS BY BEA AHBECK

Son recovering after being set on fire in Isleton

By John Bays
NEWS-SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

A man from Lodi suffered severe burns when he was reportedly set on fire near Isleton on Monday morning, according to Sgt. Shaun Hampton of the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department.

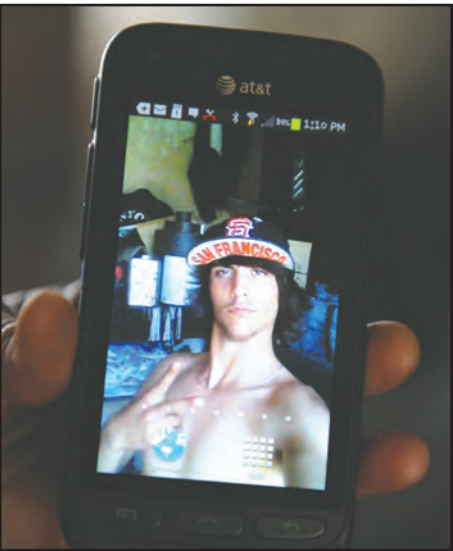
In a video posted on the department's Facebook page, Hampton said that deputies responded to reports of an adult male who had sustained major burn injuries near the Cliffhouse Fishing Access, south of Isleton in South Sacramento County at approximately 5:57 a.m. Monday.

After learning that the victim had been taken to a hospital by a private vehicle where he is being treated for burns, investigators reported that the victim had been intentionally set on fire by Robert Flemmings, 33, of Isleton, who is being held on \$350,000 bail in Sacramento County Jail.

The victim, Joseph Jeffrey Lopes, 21, of Lodi, was identified by his mother, Claudia Lopes, and her boyfriend William Smith. Claudia Lopes received a phone call at approximately 10:30 a.m. Monday informing her that her son was in the intensive care unit at UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento, she said. Although she does not own a car, Smith was able to drive her to the hospital Monday and Tuesday.

"I never thought, in a million years, that this would happen, I'm still in shock. Who does such a thing?," Claudia Lopes said at her home in Lodi on Wednesday. "Thank goodness my boyfriend was here, that was a blessing. He was able to take me there immediately, we got to the hospital at about 12:30. I'm thankful for my boyfriend, he's such a nice guy. We've been together for 13 years, and he thinks of Joseph as his own son," Claudia said.

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Claudia Lopes shows a picture on her phone of her son, Joseph Lopes, who was attacked and set on fire in Isleton, in her home in Lodi on Wednesday.

St. Anne's Catholic Church begins Lent with bilingual Mass



By John Bays
NEWS-SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Catholics young and old filed into St. Anne's Catholic Church on Wednesday afternoon, dipping their fingers in holy water before touching their foreheads, abdomens and left and right shoulders in the traditional sign of the cross.

As the congregation took their seats, Tony Moreno, director of the youth and young adult ministries, read Bible passages in Spanish. On the other side of an altar draped in purple fabric, Father Brandon Ware sat in a chair waiting to begin a bilingual Ash Wednesday service to mark the begin-

ning of Lent, a 40-day period of self-reflection for Catholics lasting until Easter Sunday.

Ware read a Bible passage, in English, advising the faithful not to perform charitable deeds in public view for recognition from others, but to do them in private for recognition from God.

PLEASE SEE ASH, PAGE 6

BEA AHBECK/NEWS-SENTINEL

Left: Atziry Garcia, 10, of Lodi, receives ashes from Father Balaswamy Dande during Ash Wednesday services at St. Anne's Catholic Church in Lodi.

Pension plan will squeeze state cities

By Adam Ashton
SACRAMENTO BEE

SACRAMENTO — California cities struggling with recent hikes in their pension fees will see another one in 2021 because of a decision CalPERS made on Tuesday to speed up the rate of their debt payments.

The change will save cities money over time, but it could squeeze local government budgets over the next few years because it requires them to shore up investment losses on a 20-year schedule instead of 30 years.

The difference probably would be a few hundred thousand dollars a year for small cities and counties, according to a CalPERS presentation describing the change.

Executives at the California Public Employees' Retirement System have advocated for faster debt payments, arguing the speedier schedule decreases

es risk and saves money.

A parade of city government officials in November, however, asked the CalPERS Board of Administration to stick to the current schedule. They said they were having trouble swallowing successive CalPERS rate hikes since 2013 that they said jeopardized their ability to fund public services.

"Each new approach only adds to the costs of cities and therefore to the taxpayers," Hayward City Councilwoman Sara Lamnin told the CalPERS board in November.

The remarks from Lamnin and dozens of other city government leaders appeared to make an impression on the CalPERS board that month. Members of the board sounded reluctant to speed up the debt payments when they first looked at the proposal three months ago.

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The Food and Drug Administration approved a first-ever blood test to detect the telltale signs of serious brain injury on Wednesday.

DREAMSTIME/ TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

FDA approves first blood test that can help diagnose a concussion

By Melissa Healy
LOS ANGELES TIMES

The Food and Drug Administration on Wednesday approved a first-ever blood test to detect the telltale signs of serious brain injury, bringing to fruition a long quest to make the diagnosis of concussions simpler and more precise.

After deliberations that took less than six months, the FDA approved the marketing of the Banyan Brain Trauma Indicator to aid the evaluation of concussions in adults. The speedy approval of such a blood test, after it was assigned the FDA designation of a "breakthrough" product, is expected to drive down the number of CT scans performed on patients who seek emergency-room care for a possible concussion, reducing both costs and patients'

exposure to radiation.

The new test identifies two brain-specific proteins that appear in the blood within 12 hours after a brain injury. Levels of these two proteins — Ubiquitin Carboxy-terminal Hydrolase-L1 and Glial Fibrillary Acidic Protein — released from the brain into the blood can help predict which patients may have brain lesions visible by CT scan and which won't.

Test results currently can be available within three to four hours. But Henry L. Nordhoff, chairman and chief executive officer of San Diego-based Banyan Biomarkers, told the Los Angeles Times on Wednesday that his company is working with the Defense Department to shorten that turnaround time to under an hour.

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